

General Ambrose Burnside House
314 Benefit Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-162

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
63-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-162

GENERAL AMBROSE BURNSIDE HOUSE

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Address: 314 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.

Plat 12, lot 305.

Present Owner: Lloyd Investment Company

Present Occupant: Various tenants

Present Use: Apartment house

Brief Statement of Significance: This house was built for General Ambrose Burnside, Civil War hero, wealthy industrialist, Governor of Rhode Island, and Senator from Rhode Island. It is an early work in Providence by Alfred Stone, the most prominent architect in Providence toward the end of the 19th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Original and Subsequent Owners:

1847 Gideon Davenport and Susan H. for \$4,055 to Richard J. Arnold, being same as deed to Grantors from Menzies Sweet in 1828 (Deed Book 56, page 20) and also conveyed by said A. Davenport to William B. Bradford and by said Bradford by deed to said Susan H. Davenport. - Deed Book 107, page 219 in Providence City Hall.

1847 Tristram Burgess to Rich J. Arnold for \$1,000, being part of Estate Grantors purchased of Peleg Hull (Deed Book 60, page 263) in 1831. - Deed Book 107, page 225 in Providence City Hall.

1865 Richard J. Arnold (Rev. Stamp \$8.00) sells to Fanny Bishop, wd, Nathaniel two certain lots of land with all bldgs. and improvements. One on the N corner of Benefit and Planet Streets and the Other on the N side of Planet Street adjoining the above. Being the same purchased by Grantor in 1847 from Gideon and Susan H. Davenport and Tristram and Mary Burgess p. 219/& 225 Book 107. The grantor means to convey all the land owned by him on the N corner of Benefit and Planet Streets and adjoining the Est. of the late Nathaniel Bishop on the N and W, to the Est. of the late Thomas Howard, also on the N side, and the Est. of the late Tristram Burgess on the W side. - Deed Book 172, page 362 in Providence City Hall.

1866 Fannie Bishop, wd, Nathaniel for \$4,000 sells to Mary R. Burnside wf of Ambrose a certain lot of land situated on the Nly corner of Benefit and Planet Streets and also a strip of land being same as grantor purchased by deed from Richard J. Arnold.----(Deed Book 172, page 362) - Deed Book 175, page 401 in Providence City Hall.

Property taxed to the following people

1866	Mary R. Burnside wf Ambrose	1894	Gardner C. Luther
1882	Mary R. Burnside Est.		Frederick E. Perkins
1884	Providence Childrens' Friend Soc.	1920	Prov. Merrill Sys. Bldg. Co. Inc.
	Home for Aged Women		
	R. I. Hospital	1934	Russell R. Fray
	Prov. Assn for Ben of Colored Children	1940	Eva I. Briggs
		1943	Paul A. Rioles and Nicholas Vendetti
1884	Mary R. Burnside Est.		
1886	R. I. H. Prust Co., trustees	1956	Lloyd Investment Co.
	Fanny W. Bishop		
	Ellen B. Cameron		
	Nancy K. Bishop		

B. Date of erection: 1866

C. Architect: Alfred Stone (1834-1908), born East Machias, Maine; graduated from Salem, Massachusetts, high school in 1850, architectural training in Boston firms, worked for Arthur Gilman in Boston; opened private practice in Boston in 1854, moved to Providence in 1864, later associated with Charles E. Carpenter and Edmund R. Willson, Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

D. Sources of Information: For Burnside, see: Knight Edwards, "Burnside, a Rhode Island Hero," Rhode Island History, January 1957.

For Stone, see: obituary in the Providence Journal, September 9, 1908; John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), passim.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a moderately large brick house, with an unusual irregular shape and a mansard roof.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: The house has an irregular but closed shape, approximately 50' x 60', with a large semicircular bay set into the southeast corner, and a small wing on the west side. The house is at the north-west corner of Benefit and Planet Streets, with the main entrance on the south side, but opening from a porch that leads to the east side of Benefit Street. Two-and-a-half stories high on the east, on a steeply sloping lot making the house three-and-a-half stories high plus an elevated basement on the west.
2. Foundations: Regular ashlar
3. Wall construction: Red-orange brick laid in running bond with narrow mortar joints. Water tables and belt courses of a light, tan stone. Labels of top floor windows continue as belt course between windows, of the same stone.
4. Porches, bulkheads, etc.: Two-story entrance porch carried around the circular bay on the southeast corner. The lower level of the porch opens on Planet Street on the south side of the house, upper level on Benefit Street on the east side. The upper floor of the porch is supported on deep wooden brackets, heavily carved, and on cast iron columns, and has a latticed iron railing. A steeply pitched roof over the upper level of the porch has a patterned slate covering, cast iron pendant trim on the eaves, and is supported on deep wooden brackets.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys with corbeled caps are visible.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main doorway on upper level of porch with double doors with lighted top halves with heavy metal grilles, semicircular fanlight, opening trimmed with carved stone. Similar door directly below in plain rectangular opening.

- b. Windows: Tall double-hung windows, single or double-light sash. Windows facing the streets have stone sills on small consoles, and either elaborately carved stone heads with consoles or stone labels. Copper-covered bay window on the upper floor on the east side may be a later addition.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof, tile covering, cast-iron railing at the peak.
- b. Cornice: Very heavy modillion cornice with denticulated bed mold.
- c. Dormers: Typical heavy dormers set into mansard roof.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

- 1. Floor plans: Rooms open off centrally placed entrance hall with stairway. Interior now divided into several apartments with many partitions added.
 - 2. Stairways: U-shaped, open well, closed string stair, runs from floor below main entrance level to attic, heavy mahogany hand rail with turned balusters and square carved newels, turned knobs missing from the newels, plaster walls in stairway, colored glass skylight at the top.
 - 3. Flooring: Hardwood floors, laid in patterns in some areas. Tiled floor in entrance hall.
 - 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
 - 5. Doorways and doors: Paneled mahogany doors in the principal rooms; molded architraves.
 - 6. Hardware: Some elaborate brass hardware remains.
 - 7. Lighting: Electric.
 - 8. Heating: Central. Some simple marble mantels with iron grates, and some elaborate wood mantels remain.
- D. Site: On sidewalk line at the northwest corner of Benefit and Planet Streets; lot slopes very steeply down toward the west; attached garage on the southwest; small garden on the northwest.